NBA STARS ON BROADWAY

BASKETBALL'S BEST INVADE THE CITY. PAGE 21

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TAINTED LOVE

Hot date. The long wait is over, and the sexiest Hollywood film in forever, based on the steamy best-seller, is out. But is it hot enough? And double crap! Did they get rid of the terrible prose? PAGE 12

Dakota Johnson canoodles with Jamie Dornan in one of the more forward scenes in the film "Fifty Shades of Grey." / UNIVERSAL PICTURES, FOCUS FEATURES

NYC loses Dems' 2016 convention to Philly

PAGE 02

Love stinks? Tour sewage plant for V-Day treat

PAGE 04

Celebrate 40 years of 'SNL' this weekend

PAGE 18

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1 NEWS

Top 3

The best of Metro.us

1 'Geek Girl in Hollywood: The problem with "kick-ass chicks"'

2 'Could Bruce Jenner be at fault for deadly car crash after all?'

3 'New York Fashion Week Fall 2015: More than just a pretty face'

On the go

Want to read Metro on your mobile device? Get the app! All you have to do is search for Metro US in the App Store or Google Play to get all the latest in news, sports, lifestyle and entertainment for free.

Brooklyn fails to net Dem Convention

Members of the Brooklyn United Marching Band pitching the borough of Brooklyn to host the 2016 DNC. To the right, Former Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell and Rocky impersonator Mike Kunda during a visit to Philadelphia by the DNC. Philly will host the convention.. / GETTY IMAGES, CHARLES MOSTOLLER, METRO

Party Pooper. Democrats choose Philly over Brooklyn's Barclays Center for 2016 convention.

"Swing and a miss, Bill," tweeted the official New York State Republican Party account Thursday morning when news broke the Democratic National Convention would skip Brooklyn in 2016.

Despite months of cheerleading and fundraising, Mayor Bill de Blasio's dream of selecting the next Democratic presidential candidate in his home borough went up in smoke with news that the party would head to Philadelphia next year.

The announcement followed intensive campaigning and fundraising that started last summer. At the end of January, City Hall announced it had $6.5 million cash on hand and $20 million in pledges to throw the political bash at the Barclays Center.

De Blasio told Metro at City Hall the money raised would be returned to the donors, with a full accounting to come in a report next week.

"We're going to publish a report on all the money that came in … to show the energy of the fundraising effort," the mayor said.

The mayor's office did not immediately respond to Metro's questions about how much money it had spent on its marketing efforts, which included a series of videos with local celebrities paid for by the city's tourism agency.

De Blasio thanked the 119 host committee members who threw their support behind the bid, including Napster founder Sean Parker, Vogue editor Anna Wintour, union leaders, banking magnates and real estate developers.

At a press conference Thursday, de Blasio dismissed speculation that the Democratic National Committee was negatively swayed by his administration's recent problems with police union leadership.

"I talked to countless people in Washington, as did the team, and it was not raised by a single person," de Blasio told reporters.

After a DNC selection committee visited the Barclays Center in August, the Sergeants Benevolent Association warned in newspapers of "dangerous choices" by de Blasio.

It said New York is "lurching backward to the bad old days of high crime, danger-infested public spaces, and families that walk our streets worried for their safety."

The last New York City convention was the 2004 Republican National Convention at Madison Square Garden, which cost the city $154 million to stage and $18 million to settle lawsuits by arrested protesters.

City Hall had pledged to raise $100 million, secure lodging and transportation and make the NYPD available for safety needs.

"We checked all those boxes," de Blasio said. "And I can't figure out something that could have been done differently. But you know, sometimes you play the game right and another team still wins."

CHESTER SORIA
@chestersoria
chester.soria@metro.us

Tweets

- "I'm so upset that the DNC will host Phil next year, and not Brooklyn, stfu!!!!" **@ARIELGO75738583**
- "Gotta admit I'm THRILLED Brooklyn lost out on the DNC. Living through the 2004 Boston convention was bad enough." **@MIZOCTY**
- "rather see the DNC in Brooklyn just because it's going to suck to be in Philly during that time. Yall can have that grandstanding headache" **@MILLIONIN20S**
- "The DNC isn't coming to New York City? So, I don't have to move?" **@ANTHONYBIALY**
- "New Yorkers writing about DNC will tell you that Philly has a complex about New York. Nobody I know in Philly ever mentions New York." **@JEFF_DEENEY**

Follow the money

We're going to publish a report on all the money that came in … to show the energy of the fundraising effort.
De Blasio

Weather

Bitter cold to continue through the weekend

An arctic blast that moved into New York City on Thursday will keeps temperatures low through the weekend.

"The highs won't be very high," said Joe Pollina, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

Friday's high should be in the upper teens, with wind chills dipping into the single digits.

Temperatures Saturday will hit the upper 20s to low 30s, with a chance of snow, but Sunday will see highs only in the middle-to-upper teens.

Sunday night into Monday morning could be the coldest air the city has felt this season, Pollina said, with overnight lows in the single digits, and possibly below zero, and wind chills as low as -20 degrees.

Alternate side parking is suspended Friday and Saturday. METRO

Airport

Gunman robs seven JFK livery drivers

Seven different livery drivers have been robbed by the same brazen Queens gunman pretending to be a cop, authorities say.

In each incident, which began Feb. 2, the suspect was picked up by his targeted driver at JFK and taken to different addresses in the borough, cops said. The total take: $1,000 in cash, credit cards, phones and a GPS.

He threatened to shoot or arrest each of his victims but never brandished an actual gun, the victims said.
JOHN A. OSWALD

The suspect / PROVIDED

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Sewage plant is Valentine's treat

Brooklyn. Water treatment plant tour is the city's most exclusive Valentine's date.

The Newtown Creek sewage treatment plant handles 300 to 600 million gallons of waste a day. / BESS ADLER, METRO

Every day, the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment plant in Greenpoint processes between 300 and 600 million gallons of sewage and runoff.

Romantic? Yes, according to the hundreds of New Yorkers who are signed up — and 50 more on a waiting list — for three tours of the treatment plant on Saturday.

"Every month we do a tour, and a couple of years ago the tour happened to fall on Valentine's Day," said Frank Locar, Newtown Creek's facility manager. "Next thing you know, it went viral, and it was all over the world. And all of a sudden it became kind of this interesting date to have."

Throw in a few Hershey's Kisses in the Visitor's Center, panoramic views of New York City from the top of the plant's eight steel "digester eggs," and you have yourself Valentine's Day plans.

"We're still waiting for someone to get engaged," Locar said.

But the Valentine's lure has a bigger purpose —how they play a role in preserving the water the rest of the city will eventually drink.

Baby wipes are a big problem, because they don't break down like toilet paper, Locar said. Newtown Creek visitors don't get to see the screens that separate the garbage from the water, perhaps the smelliest part of the not-so-smelly plant, due to safety concerns.

City Council is looking to crack down on baby wipes infiltrating the city's sewers. A bill sponsored by Councilmen Antonio Reynoso (D-Brooklyn) and Donovan Richards (D-Queens) would prohibit manufacturers from labeling the wipes as "flushable."

It costs about $3 million more a year to remove the wipes from the water treatment screens, according to Vinny Sapienza, deputy commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection. The wipes make up about 90 percent of the junk removed from the system.

"Wastewater process is a very natural process, actually," Locar said. Giant screens remove the biggest pieces of debris from logs to the occasional live turtle, before the smaller particulates are left to settle out of the water. After that it's on to the bugs. While the water is treated, the sludge left behind, called biosolid, ends up in the iconic digester eggs that rise 145 feet — nearly 15 stories, above ground. The biosolids give off natural gas which the plant uses to run its own boilers.

The plant already produces enough extra methane to power 5,200 local homes, and will soon do so under a program with National Grid.

So if you'd rather stay snug at home this Valentine's Day, just guess what's keeping you warm.

Register for future tours at www.nyc.gov/dep.

Don't flush

"Baby wipes have become very popular in the culture, and our society. They're not really flushable ... they don't decompose quick enough for us."
Locar

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Transit. MTA has more debt than Cuba, Iceland and Panama

The MTA's run up a bigger tab than 30 countries around the world.

Syria, Cuba and Costa Rica are all less in debt than the MTA, according to a report by transit riders group the Straphangers Campaign.

The MTA currently has $34.1 billion in outstanding debt.

"Heavy reliance on borrowing to fix transit is crushing riders like a packed subway car at rush hour," Straphangers' attorney Gene Russianoff wrote in a statement.

The New York State-managed transit agency has at least $4 billion more in debt than Syria, and owes more than Iceland's $14.5 billion and Panama's $16.1 billion combined.

The numbers were taken from a recent measure by The Economist magazine, and each country measures debt differently, but Russianoff said the magnitude of spending should be obvious.

CHESTER JESUS SORIA

Cuomo's response

Gov. Andrew Cuomo is evaluating the MTA's proposed $32 billion, five-year capital plan for long-term investments and $13.5 billion operating budget, of which $2.2 billion is committed bring the debt down.

- "The economic health of the world's second largest regional economy depends on a well-functioning transit system, which in turn is made possible by the MTA's capital program," the agency wrote in response.

Crawling into your heart

What has six legs, a surprisingly high tolerance for radiation and is bound to crawl into your loved one's heart? Any one of the Bronx Zoo's thousands of Madagascar hissing roaches can bear the name of a loved one in exchange for a $10 donation to the zoo.

JULIE LARSEN MAHER

Lottery

Powerball winners split $564M

A food mart in a small city north of Dallas, and a gas station in southern Puerto Rico were two of three places that sold winning tickets in the $564.1 million Powerball lottery, officials said.

The Powerball rolled over for nearly three months, pushing the jackpot beyond the half-billion mark until three tickets matched the numbers 11, 13, 25, 39 and 54, lottery officials said. The Powerball number was 19.

Winners can select a lump-sum cash payout or opt to take annuity payments over 29 years, before taxes. Before Wednesday, the last Powerball jackpot was won in late November at $90 million.

The jackpot has reverted to its starting point at $40 million.

REUTERS

Tech

Voting open for new MTA apps

Public voting is now open for the MTA's third-annual app challenge.

Apps that help riders determine which elevators are working, alert them to transit changes and provide voice directions in the subway have been created by developers from New York and beyond.

Among the data released were on-time status for Metro-North and LIRR trains, MTA bus locations and three months of on-time and departure data for eight subway lines and the Staten Island Railway.

The public can vote on the $5,000 Popular Choice prize.

The other categories are judged by tech experts.

Voting continues through March 25.

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TaskRabbit. App gives lovers an edge this Valentine's Day

Not that love is really defined by waiting in line, but New Yorkers who want to take that special person to trendy restaurants where the wait for tables can take hours are turning to websites and apps that will do the waiting for you.

TaskRabbit connects people looking for help with chores and errands to willing free agents.

Among one of the most popular hired jobs: standing in line.

By the numbers

$25-60

The going rate for a short-term personal assistant for Saturday night is $25 to $60 per hour.

The top two restaurants of choice for TaskRabbit users are the West Village's Spotted Pig and ubiquitous Ippudo Japanese restaurants, all of which are infamous for their wait times. **CHESTER JESUS SORIA**

Saving time

Some 61% of TaskRabbit users in New York report having hired help to deliver their bouquets around town. Thirty percent of tasks were for candy, while nine percent of generous New Yorkers had both sent to their Valentines.

- For delivery in lower Manhattan on V-Day, users can either pay $25 for a TaskRabbit-selected delivery person or pick their own stand-in for $16 to $150 an hour, depending on how precious the cargo.

Obama to announce executive order on cybersecurity data

Safe. Tech companies and startups have been beefing up encryption in the wake of Edward Snowden's leaks.

President Obama. / GETTY IMAGES

President Barack Obama is expected to announce an executive order directing the government and companies to share more information about cybersecurity threats in response to attacks like that on Sony Entertainment.

As in other policy areas where Obama has been unable to get legislation through the now Republican-controlled Congress, the White House is turning to more limited administrative actions to advance its agenda as much as it can.

The move comes as big Silicon Valley companies prove hesitant to fully support more mandated cybersecurity information sharing without reforms to government surveillance practices exposed by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden.

A government center for cybersecurity, announced earlier this week by Obama's top homeland security adviser, could play a role in the process. But the Stanford attendees said they did not have details.

Administration officials have said they would prefer legislation that would require more information sharing and limit any legal liability for companies that share too much. They have said that an executive order could not limit liability.

But getting anything through Congress on the subject has proven a daunting task. That is unlikely to get much better without at least the support of big Silicon Valley companies.

Those companies, however, have refused to give full-throated support to cybersecurity bills without some reform of surveillance practices exposed by Snowden that have hurt U.S. technology companies' efforts to win business in other countries. **REUTERS**

Pentagon

Senate OKs Ashton Carter as new defense secretary

The Senate voted overwhelmingly on Thursday to confirm Ashton Carter as President Barack Obama's next secretary of defense.

Carter, 60, who was approved in a 93-5 vote, served as deputy defense secretary, the Pentagon's No. 2 position, from 2011 to 2013.

He was also the Defense Department's chief weapons buyer from 2009 to 2011 when he led a major restructuring of the F-35 fighter jet program.

At his confirmation hearing on Feb. 4, Carter underscored his determination to boost the U.S. defense budget, drive down the cost of new weapons and make sure new technologies are delivered to troops quicker. **REUTERS**

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Celebrating. 20 years of Metro, the largest global newspaper

On Feb. 13, 1995, Metro launched its first-ever free newspaper edition in Stockholm. Twenty years on, the newspaper has expanded across the globe to become the world's largest global newspaper with over 20 million readers. Sakari Pitkänen, a former long-time employee of Metro, who since the mid-1990s served as editor of Metro Stockholm and then global editor-in-chief of Metro International, tells us the success story.

At the time did you ever envision the paper becoming the global player it is today?
Personally, I was too busy with getting Metro Stockholm on its feet! But certainly, the founders of the newspaper did have plans for an international expansion early on.

In an ever-changing media landscape, what has made Metro stand out for two decades?
Being free of charge, certainly. Pay-for newspapers across Europe were and are in decline, so it was very difficult for them to compete with Metro. With the advent of the Internet age, we were the first organization to say that news is a commodity that you could get for free.

Another key factor that has helped Metro has been the role of big cities. All over the world, cities have continued to expand and the new influx of people tend not to have a relationship with an established, traditional newspaper. That's where Metro came in. What's more, unlike old newspapers, we followed the needs of the modern reader. We recognized that the reader now is much younger and more female. We felt we were geniuses!

ANTHONY JOHNSTON,
METRO WORLD NEWS

Opinion

TOM FOREMAN

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT FOR CNN

THE WAR OF THE ROSES WINS TOO

I am a father of daughters. From the day they were born, I have been madly in love with their every look, gesture, thought and smile. When they were little I admired their artwork and soccer playing. As they've grown older, I have been dazzled by the adults they are becoming. Along with my wife, they are my Valentines, and I can not imagine life without them.

So I can't know what the family of Kayla Mueller is going through. The death of that young Arizona woman in the hands of ISIS was unthinkable, cruel and horrendous; and it has clearly ignited a desire for revenge among many Americans.

And yet, I find myself thinking a great deal about what she was attempting.

She was trying to help people in need: Syrians who have lost their towns, their homes, family members and friends. People who are afraid, wounded and hopeless.

Quoted

Generosity, sympathy and a willingness to help others are every bit as woven into the fabric of America as is our ability to do battle.

Debate is underway here in D.C. about what should come next on the military front, and that is proper. As much as we may dislike war, history tells us that sometimes vicious enemies will not cease their inhumanities unless forced. But there is something to be said for the extraordinary power of kindness and love too.

Generosity, sympathy and a willingness to help others are every bit as woven into the fabric of America as is our ability to do battle.

And those qualities too, as much as F-16s, make us stronger in the world. It is, after all, easy for our far-flung enemies to preach hatred against the Americans if all that their people see are drones, and missile attacks. It is harder when they see an American like Kayla Mueller, offering a kind look, an open hand and help … despite political, religious, ethnic and national differences.

Enemies undoubtedly cower before America's unsurpassed military might, but on this Valentine's Day, it is good to remember that while weapons win wars, kindness wins people. And the merchants of hatred fear our love too.

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TEH1

Backlash

Story 'rebrands violence as romance'

The social media campaign #50Dollars-Not50Shades is asking people to donate $50 to a domestic violence shelter rather than going to see the "Fifty Shades" movie to help "victims of abusive relationships like the one glamorized in the 'Fifty Shades' series," the campaign's Facebook page reads.

The hashtag's creator, Gail Dines, sums up the story as "a naive, vulnerable, immature woman" trying to change "a sexual sadist by showering him with love."

That scenario tends to play out differently in the real world.

"Women and girls need to know that should they meet a real Christian Grey, the end of that story will be them running for their lives, not living happily ever after."

DMITRY BELYAEV

Our complicated relationship with 'Fifty Shades'

BDSM. For good, and naughty, the 'Fifty Shades effect' is real.

Since its publication in June 2011, "Fifty Shades of Grey" has had an undeniable impact far beyond the book world. The BDSM-inclined Christian Grey and his steamy seduction of Anastasia Steele brought S&M experimentation into the mainstream. But besides increases of handcuff incidents and rope sales, the books have exposed a niche side of sex — for better and worse — creating what's been dubbed "the Fifty Shades of Grey effect."

From sex shop to 'love store'

When Laurent Steeg co-founded Passage du Désir in 2006, he wanted to offer a softer version of the sex shop experience. "The idea behind this project is to take away the guilt and shame," he says.

With 60 percent of their clients being women, Passage co-founder Patrick Prapant says the books have boosted sales of several items — specifically woman-focused products. "We saw a massive increase of sales of Geisha balls, an item Anastasia tries in the novel," he says.

Sex and society

Psychoanalyst and sexologist Catherine Blanc doesn't see the missionary position being replaced in the majority of people's sex lives. Blanc says our fantasies now are pretty much in line with what humans have always thought about and practiced. "People's fantasies aren't more extravagant than they have always been," she says. "Domination, possession, submission are traditional elements of human sexuality." But trends are not for everyone. "Some young ladies mistake what they want and what they want to want because society tells them to," she says. "They are afraid to look [uptight]."

ELODIE NOEL
@metronewyork
letters@metro.us

The sexcapades of Anastasia Steele and Christian Grey have led to a boom in the sex toy and bondage business. / GETTY IMAGES

By the numbers

A survey of more than 1,000 Passage du Désir customers yielded these results:

- 23% use massage oil
- 14% own a sex toy
- 43% of sex toy owners use it with their partner
- 32% use it alone
- 77% of people who use "accessories" find their sex life has improved
- 55% have heard of "Fifty Shades of Grey"
- 8% say the books had an influence on their sex lives

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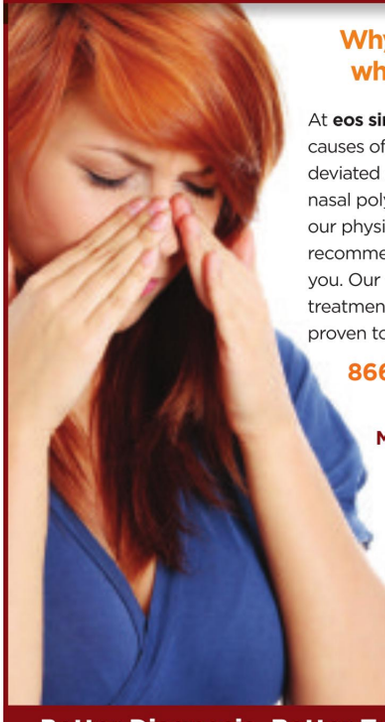

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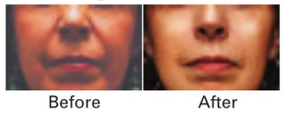

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2 CULTURE

Stay home

Steamy streaming sex

The "Fifty Shades" film is surprisingly skimpy on salaciousness. These naughtier films are all currently streaming:

'Basic Instinct'

(Netflix Instant)
This is still pretty shocking, and the unrated cut on Netflix makes the big bonking centerpiece even longer, with Michael Douglas spending more time downtown — the kind of thing that still, amazingly, gets movies slapped with an NC-17.

'In the Realm of the Senses'

(Hulu)
Even in the book, Anastasia and Christian come nowhere near the couple in this scandalous Japanese art film from 1976, which features real, endless sex, with one hell of a capper.

'The Night Porter'

(Hulu)
Charlotte Rampling and Dirk Bogarde aren't just into BDSM in this 1973 shocker: She's a former concentration camp prisoner and he's her Nazi lover, who run into each other years later and pick things up again. Whee!

'I am Curious (Yellow)'

(Hulu)
This Swedish quasi-doc on its youth culture was a big hit in America in 1967. Why? Because it was frank about sex. In fact, it was the first mainstream film to include male frontal nudity.

Does 'Fifty Shades' fall limp?

Perhaps it seemed E.L. James' über-bestseller was too hot for the movies. And yet here it is anyway. But does the film actually have some merit? Are its sex scenes a letdown? What didn't make the cut? We investigate. **MATT PRIGGE**

UNIVERSAL PICTURES, FOCUS FEATURES

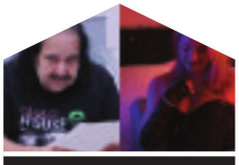
Pros & cons

CON: Jamie Dornan, who plays alpha-shark billionaire Christian Grey, is pretty weak, although no actor could sell the line "I'm 50 shades of f—ed up."	**PRO:** Dakota Johnson, however, is very funny. Her Anastasia may seem deer-in-headlights, but she turns nervousness into killer deadpan line readings.
CON: The sex is, shall we say, flaccid. Not only that, it's in such small portions. Sorry, there's no geisha balls set piece.	**PRO:** Whittling down the BDSM to a nub means having to engage less in the book's questionable antics, not the least its misrepresentation of BDSM.
CON: The film had to remain faithful, and try as she might, director Sam Taylor-Johnson ("Nowhere Boy") can only transcend the florid passages so much.	**PRO:** Entirely gone is the book's biggest liability: that prose. Author E.L. James seems to only know 30 words, and two of them are "genital clamps."
CON: It's sill mommy-porn fantasy that offers a watered-down and troubling look at someone submitting to the whims of a studly man.	**PRO:** It's more turned on by their banter than their sex. This isn't Clint Eastwood's heroic saving of "The Bridges of Madison County," but it'll do.

Origins. What's this about 'Twilight'?

If some of the plot twists and atmosphere of "Fifty Shades of Grey" seem familiar, that's because the book and film have their roots in another breakout literary success that doesn't get a ton of respect: Stephenie Meyer's "Twilight" series. In fact, E.L. James' best-seller was originally conceived as "Twilight" fan-fiction — spin-off tales created by readers that reimagine their favorite characters in different situations or romantic entanglements.

So how similar is "Fifty Shades of Grey" to "Twilight"? Well, replace Sleepy Forks, Washington, with bustling Seattle, swap out high school for grad school and change vampirism to sadomasochism, and there you go. **NED EHRBAR**



Visit **Metro.us** to see adult film stars like Ron Jeremy read excerpts from "Fifty Shades."

Book vs. movie

What's missing?

For starters, no narration tracks means none of Anastasia's first-person musings, including clunkers like, "I work on my essay on 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles.' Damn, that woman was in the wrong place at the wrong time in the wrong century."

Jose, her friend who drunkenly makes a pass at Anastasia (but is stopped by Christian), disappears after his low point.

Most of the sex scenes are diluted or excised entirely. The tampon scene? Only in your dreams.

The novel's excessive wealth porn is still present but slightly eased. Where the novel freaked out every time Christian had her bumped up to first class, the film never once mentions this.

The book's accidental topicality — a discussion about an outbreak of measles and those pesky anti-vaccine idiots when Anastasia has dinner with Christian's parents — is sadly AWOL.

The past. Other mega-sellers made into films

'Gone with the Wind,' by Margaret Mitchell (1936)
Copies sold: 30 million
Movie year: 1939

A doorstop became an appropriately oversize epic, and a handsome one. Every single shot in its nearly four hours is a doozy.

'Lolita,' by Vladimir Nabokov (1955)
Copies sold: 50 million
Movie year: 1961

One of lit's greatest masterworks sold because of its raciness. A movie was a no-brainer, but in 1961, director Stanley Kubrick couldn't even imply it was about pedophilia.

'Valley of the Dolls,' by Jacqueline Susann (1966)
Copies sold: 30 million
Movie year: 1967

It took a year for this trash opus to become a trash blockbuster. Three years later the studio that owned it mocked it with "Beyond the Valley of the Dolls."

ALL PHOTOS PROVIDED

'The Bridges of Madison County,' by Robert James Waller (1992)
Copies sold: 50 million
Movie year: 1995

Clint Eastwood's film of the worst novel ever written took a piece of cheesecake and made it into a beautifully understated adult romance.

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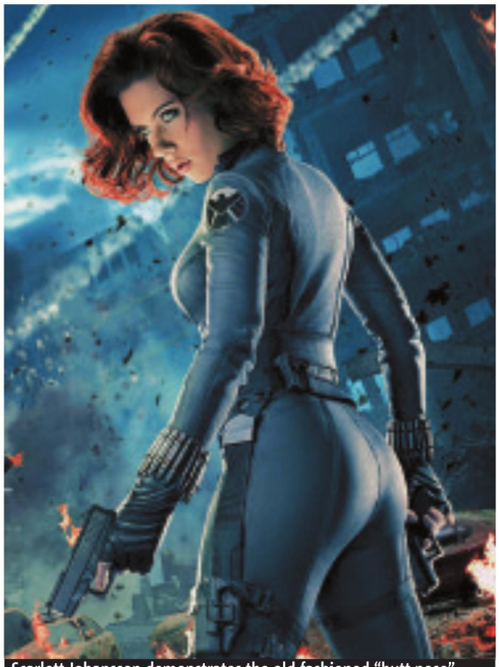
THE PROBLEM WITH THE 'KICK-ASS CHICK'



Scarlett Johansson demonstrates the old-fashioned "butt pose" forced upon strong female characters. / MARVEL

You may have heard the term "strong female character" bandied about over the past few years — how we don't have enough of them or how many of them are put in "butt pose" on the posters for the movies or TV shows they're in. You know the butt pose: It's Scarlett Johansson as Black Widow with her back to us but with her head turned to gaze alluringly over her shoulder. Well, of course you can't kick ass unless you're sexy and wear form-hugging black leather. It's the law!

The problem with kick-ass chicks in movies is that no one really knows what to do with them once they finish laying waste to the bad guys. (Black Widow is an exception.) If they're too tough or kick too much ass, they have to be killed off or be brought down in some way. No guy is going to fall in love with a girl who can break him in half or outshoot him, right? Sigh.

I bring this up because if you look at your "strong female character" as a revenge catalyst, plot point or eye candy alone, you're missing the third word in that phrase. Geena Davis recently suggested that you gender swap half the characters in your script and see if they hold up. Think of an action movie and try it in your head. Interesting, right?

Quoted

"The problem with kick-ass chicks in films is that no one really knows what to do with them once they finish laying waste to the bad guys."

Bonus point

Female or she-male?

The other thing we have to consider is what we think of as "strong." When we say, "That show has a lot of strong female characters," are we saying that they all display traditionally "male" characteristics? We largely put the value on "male" characteristics and treat femininity as weak or less than. Let me ask you this: Is Buffy a stronger character than Willow in "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"? Is Willow stronger than Tara?

I'm just saying that, if we want to change things, we have to start asking the questions. Enjoy the "Buffy" debate you're about to have!

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Action. 'Kingsman' is a violent American romp, but from England

Colin Firth teaches Taron Egerton how to become a gentlemanly killer for the government in "Kingsman: The Secret Service." / JAAP BUITENDIJK

Reuniting with "Kick-Ass" graphic novelist Mark Millar, director Matthew Vaughn makes a suitably over-the-top film out of Millar's "The Secret Service," with Colin Firth as a dangerous but debonair gentleman agent who recruits a low income kid (Taron Egerton) into his elite outfit to battle a dangerous billionaire (Samuel L. Jackson).

The lowdown: Vaughn's veddy English spy romp is like a brighter, cheekier Frank Miller: an equal opportunity offender that lobs countless cultural grenades — not because it's angry, as the terminally frothing Miller is, but just because it felt like it. It's the cat perched next to the spilled milk. The far right will love that it lampoons Islamic terrorists, global warming and Obama, but lose their heads when the film's splashiest set piece takes place in a homophobic, racist, anti-Semitic Deep South church. Trying to put a finger on what it's saying is pointless; it simply wants to upset everyone, just for kicks.

Is "Kingsman" parodying old school Bond or reasserting the franchise's classist, Old Britannia leanings? Truth is, "Kingsman" just doesn't care. It's a goof, a lark, a bit of silliness that blends dry English wit and reticence into a melange of American blockbuster explosions and cool killings. It's an alternate universe Bond movie that arrives in an age when the series has gone dark and realistic. It's a movie for teenage boys if there ever was one, which is to say it's also powerfully sexless, right up to an ending that would titillate only a 14-year-old. **MATT PRIGGE**

Review

'Kingsman: The Secret Service'

Director: Matthew Vaughn

Stars: Taron Egerton, Colin Firth

Rating: R

●●●○○

Review

'The Rewrite'

●●○○○

Marisa Tomei doesn't quite romance Hugh Grant in "The Rewrite." RLJ/IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT

It's too easy to slam a movie about screenwriting for its lazy, cliched script, one that largely relies on the charm of its overqualified cast to carry it through. Lightweight semi-satires like "The Rewrite" have a certain comfort food charm, even when they turn rancid well before completion. Hugh Grant plays a washed-up author of an Oscar-winning classic, who grouchily accepts a position at an East Coast school. There he peoples his class with hotties with whom he can confer after school. That his hesitant romance with an older student (Marisa Tomei, reliably glowing) remains hesitant would count as a novel twist on the formula if it didn't clearly find the idea of Grant banging someone only four years his junior icky. In lovable cad mode, Grant is fun without trying, though, as here, it's a type that should never be forced into redemption. **MP**

Review

Anna Kendrick and Jeremy Jordan play marrieds whose dying relationship is chronicled in "The Last Five Years." / RADIUS-TWC

'The Last Five Years'

●●○○○

There's a lot a filmmaker can do with Jason Robert Brown's long-lived, cult musical, which jumps back and forth between either side of a busting apart couple: Jamie's (Jeremy Jordan) story moves chronologically, Cathy's (Anna Kendrick) backwards. But director Richard LaGravenese does next to nothing. He flattens out the material, aiming for a naturalism that works in theory, but produces a break-up film that's non-depressing. It's up to his stars to produce the fireworks, and at least there's Kendrick, whose talent is put to better use here than in "Into the Woods." **MP**

Review

'Da Sweet Blood of Jesus'

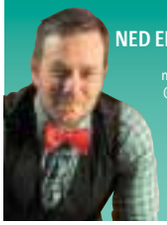
●●●○○

Spike Lee said his crowd-funded vampire film wouldn't be a remake of "Blacula," but it is a remake of "Ganja & Hess," the 1973 indie about bloodlust as a metaphor for black assimilation into white society. Lee's is even angrier, and funnier. Freed from studio meddling, he's free to mix up tones even more than usual, which is saying something. Observing a black scientist (Stephen Tyrone Williams) on Martha's Vineyard who's hooked on blood, it's semi-coherent as a tall tale, but story is not why one watches a Spike Lee joint. It's his deeply eccentric, singular voice that grabs. Granted, with that comes his own issues — some productive (his disapproval of bougie African-Americans), some less so (his problems with lesbians). But watching Lee work through his issues — and others' — is always rewarding. **MP**

Zaraah Abrahams plays a vampire lover in "Da Sweet Blood of Jesus." GRAVITAS VENTURES

THE WORD

Ned Ehrbar takes on the world of gossip.



NED EHRBAR
@Nedrick
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1 Uma Thurman speaks out about her new look

So yeah, those photos of Uma Thurman on the red carpet earlier this week that got so much attention? She heard what you've been saying about them. Thurman stopped by the "Today" show for a chat and inevitably the online uproar around her new look came up. "I look weird," Thurman admits. "I guess nobody liked my makeup. I mean, I've been doing this for years and years and years, and people say nice things and they say mean things, and it's just like, whatever!" And she admits she'll likely not be rocking that shocking red carpet look again. "We saw how well the dark lipstick worked the other night," she joked.

2 Guys, your pickup tricks make Vince Vaughn sick

Vince Vaughn might have become famous playing conniving womanizers in films like "Swingers" and "Wedding Crashers," but he is absolutely appalled by the behavior of his characters' real-life counterparts these days. Appalled. "Gaming on women has become almost like the dark arts. Like, if you're not cutting her down or using psychological tricks to make fun of her, you won't get anywhere," he tells Playboy. "I would suggest that if you take the avenue of putting a woman down or making fun of her so she feels insecure enough to go out with you, you're ultimately screwing yourself. I mean, let's face it, if you require coaching and techniques to get a woman, it'll come out as dishonest and you'll probably end up unhappy or alone." So, you know, don't be a creep.

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Daily video

Conan O'Brien visits a Korean spa

TEAM COCO / YOUTUBE

Who doesn't love a good day of personal pampering? Conan O'Brien heads to L.A.'s Koreatown for a supposedly relaxing visit to a spa, which turns out to be possibly the most awkward late-night talk show segment of all time. And he's not going it alone. He brought along "The Walking Dead" star Steven Yeun as backup, and neither of them are super-excited about the expected public nudity. But their pain is your enjoyment, so sit back and relax.

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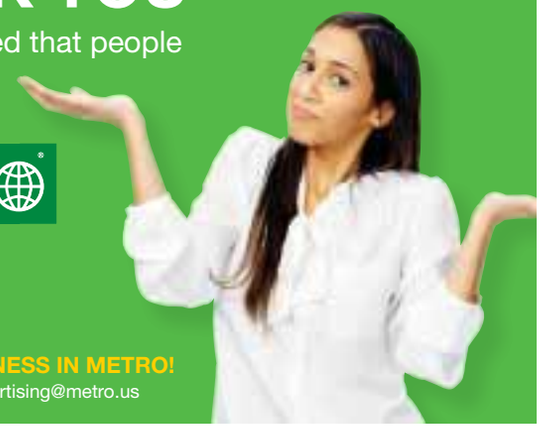

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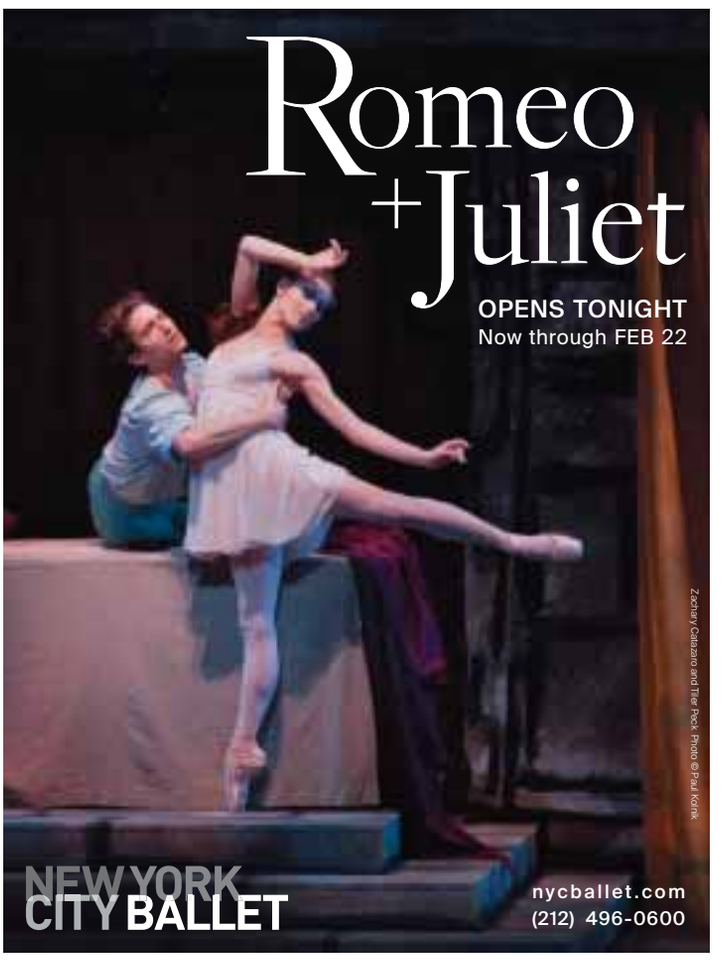

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40 years of 'Live from New York'

For a program based on the brevity of sketch comedy, "Saturday Night Live" has been on for a long time — 40 years, to be exact. The show stayed relevant over the years thanks to performers who shaped the world of comedy. Here are the stars we think were the biggest influences on pop culture, decade by decade. **LISA WEIDENFELD**

ONE NIGHT SNL40

Visit **Metro.us** to see these stars during their "SNL" glory days.

The '70s

Bill Murray

The early casts were stacked with future comedy stars, from Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi to Jane Curtin and Chevy Chase. While we'd like to choose future Sen. Al Franken, because his career took the oddest turn, we're picking Bill Murray, who dominated the box office in the '80s with "Ghostbusters," "Stripes" and more, and then began a late career renaissance as a dramatic actor who rewrote the book on post-"SNL" careers.

The '80s

Eddie Murphy

It may be hard to remember, given the "Norbit" and "Daddy Day Care" years, but in the '80s Murphy was one of the sharpest comics around, covering racial issues in Reagan-era America, which was not a time known for its progressive politics. Though he hasn't returned to the show since the '80s, he's set to make an appearance for the big 40th anniversary special.

The '90s

Will Ferrell

While fellow '90s alum Mike Myers had a fairly unstoppable streak of hits, it's Ferrell's charming goofball style that has remained part of the comedy world. And it's hard to imagine any other actor from the show making quite the splash that Ferrell did with his George W. Bush impression, which was so popular that he brought it back during the 2008 election.

The '00s

Tina Fey

Remember when "Saturday Night Live" became all about the women? Along with being the show's first female head writer, Fey ushered in an era of women dominating the show, a trend that continued with Kristen Wiig and on to current star Kate McKinnon. She did take a break — to write the preeminent teen comedy of the decade, "Mean Girls."

Prepping for NYFW with Rachel Zoe

The celebrity stylist turned designer is all set for showtime at New York Fashion Week. The 43-year-old takes us through her upcoming collection, beauty must-haves and why NYC is what makes her tick. **ELODIE NOEL**

How do you get ready for Fashion Month?
Once New York Fashion Week starts, my life becomes complete madness, so I soak up every second beforehand with my kids [4-year-old Skyler Morrison and 1-year-old Kaius Jagger]. That, and I try to get as much sleep as possible.

What do you like and dislike about the show season?
I'm presenting my collection and I will attend some shows as well, so it's nonstop. I love the excitement of it all, but on the same note, it's completely exhausting!

What city do you look forward to the most: New York, London, Milan or Paris?
There's something about the energy of New York that I love.

What are your inspirations for the new season?
I am endlessly inspired by the glamorous lives of women in the '60s and '70s. That era had such a wide range of iconic styles that I love to channel. I'm constantly seeking new ways to modernize the classics and reinterpret them for today's woman.

What trend do you think will become bigger?
Women want to invest in timeless pieces, and I think that will continue to be a big trend for fall.

RACHEL ZOE
ALL IMAGES PROVIDED

Zoe's survival kit

Clinique Chubby Stick in "Broadest Berry"
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Tom Ford Traceless foundation
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Charlotte Tilbury Color Chameleon eye pencil in "Black Diamonds"
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Reviews

GETTY IMAGES

BCBG MAX AZRIA

BCBG's city girl embraces her inner Joni Mitchell for fall with some crafty layering. Models came down the runway in silky bohemian frocks and embroidered kaftans made winter-appropriate thanks to plush,cozy turtlenecks, textured statement coats and buttery over-the knee boots. There's a lesson to be learned from this show — we're headed out to stock up on turtlenecks now.

Trends: Repurposed summer dresses, turtlenecks, winter white

Instaworthy: The show's opening white dress with fringe and leather lace-up stitching, or the funnel-neck sweater cape, yes please!

PROVIDED

REBECCA TAYLOR

It's the '70s show on fall runways so far, and Rebecca Taylor's take on the decade includes sexy A-line minis, a disco-ready metallic pleated skirt and floral high-waist trousers. But what really had us swooning was the outerwear, including a baby blue car coat with shearling trim and leopard faux-fur topper — chic and cruelty free. We totally dig it.

Trends: A-line skirts, high-waist pants,

Instaworthy: That faux-fur leopard coat is timeless.

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Horoscope

Aquarius | Jan. 21-Feb. 18 Think twice before reviving an old idea. If you are unsure, take a walk down memory lane and relive a past experience that left you confused.

Pisces | Feb. 19-March 20 Following your heart will lead to a poor choice. Resentment will grow if you try to take on responsibilities. Put your needs first.

Aries | March 21-April 20 Get active. Unless you speak up and take action, no one will know what you want or what you can do. Avoid being overlooked.

Taurus | April 21-May 21 The benefits of networking should not be overlooked. Get in touch with people who can show you the most promising direction.

Gemini | May 22-June 20 Make a positive impression that accurately portrays what you have to offer. If you embellish the truth, you will ruin your chance.

Cancer | June 21-July 22 A romantic evening will intensify an important relationship. Be aggressive, but stick to the rules and regulations on your quest to get ahead.

Leo | July 23-Aug. 22 Spend time with people who challenge you mentally and physically. You will find it impossible to turn down an opportunity to travel.

Virgo | Aug. 23-Sept. 22 A financial deal will reduce your cash flow, but the long-term benefits will be worth your while. A difference of opinion will escalate if you don't compromise.

Libra | Sept. 23-Oct. 22 A lofty sales pitch will not deliver what it promises. Carefully think your steps through before making a major decision.

Scorpio | Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Follow your heart. Attentiveness to home and family will cement your bond with the people who mean the most to you.

Sagittarius | Nov. 22-Dec. 21 You can't run from emotional matters indefinitely. Instigate a conversation that will straighten out any misunderstanding.

Capricorn | Dec. 22-Jan. 20 You are stronger than you think. Don't be threatened by someone trying to push you into something that you don't want to do.

EUGENIA LAST

Sudoku: Easy and hard

		9		2	1			
1		4			8			7
5					7		3	
4	8			5		3		
		1		8		2		
		2		1			4	5
	6		1					3
9			8			7		1
			6	4		5		

6	4		9					
	8	7			6		3	
	9					6	5	4
4		2			1			
	5						7	
			6			2		5
1	2	8					4	
	3		7			8	2	
					8		9	3

How to play
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Letters to the editor

Neutrality doesn't mean equality

RE: "Net doesn't pay for itself" (Metro, Feb. 10)
Net neutrality means everyone pays the same market price. You pay more for more use, so the providers are NOT hurt. Allowing insiders and large players to manipulate is what disrupts the market. It reduces access for most. That access is needed to promote innovation. Favoring insiders promotes monopoly, not innovation. Adam Smith defined a free market as one that is free from manipulation. He warned that merchants would collude to abuse the market, and that regulation is needed to keep the market free.

HARRY THORN, VIA EMAIL

Let Israel have its say

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu needs to address Congress. Everyone in this country needs to know how close Iran is to going nuclear. We heard President Obama make his case on sanctions. Now let's hear the other side. Congress should hear exactly what the prime minister has to say. What could be more important then a nuclear Iran?

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN, VIA EMAIL

letters@metro.us

Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words. Metro reserves the right to edit all letters. Please include your name and contact info.

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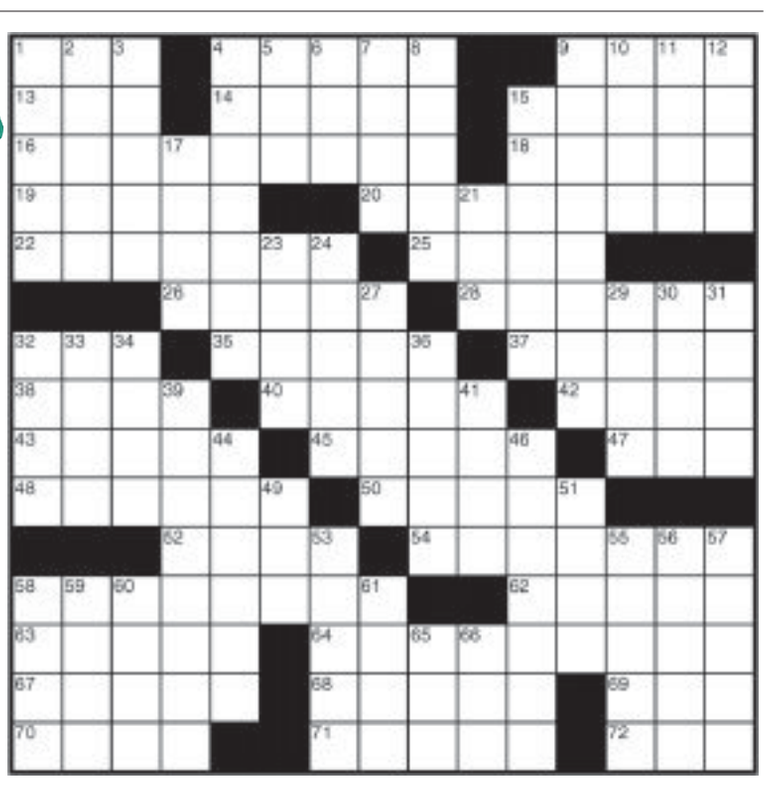
Crossword

Across

1 Coffee maker
4 River in Russia
9 Swarms upon
13 Half a bray
14 Ties the score
15 Makes a contribution
16 Gear
18 Like a good sentry
19 Where Asia begins
20 Waiters' concerns
22 In a hammock, maybe
25 Easy gait
26 — truly
28 Brawl
32 Pilot's sighting
35 Sister's girl
37 Hidden supply
38 Branch
40 After the deadline
42 This, in Guadalajara
43 Hits dead-center
45 Henry VIII's house
47 Kipling classic
48 Staple, perhaps
50 Waits patiently
52 Hecklers' chorus
54 Aerie hatchlings
58 Tenners
62 Slugger Hank —
63 Braid
64 Try hard to mooch
67 Deserves
68 Ruminated
69 Early veggie
70 Chicken part
71 Blends in
72 Chiding sound

Down

1 Mover's rental (hyph.)
2 Copy
3 India neighbor
4 One interpretation
5 Future fish
6 Tolerated
7 Lions' quarry
8 Selling point
9 Weigh heavily against
10 Pizzeria's must
11 Arctic floater
12 Mach 1 breakers
15 Croc's cousins
17 Foe opposite
21 Playful bark
23 Soir follower
24 Comparatively large in size
27 Cancel a launch
29 Hogshead
30 — spumante
31 Phony
32 Humerus neighbor
33 Edict
34 Skip over
36 Murphy or Rabbitt
39 Telling secrets
41 Jedi knight trainer
44 Lookouts
46 Best wishes
49 Ad — committee
51 Chair-back piece
53 Reads hastily
55 Release magma
56 Gets in shape
57 Creep about
58 Gush forth
59 Jai —
60 Caution
61 Soot
65 Air-pump meas.
66 Donne's "done"



Thursday's answer

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LeBron James garnered the second-most All-Star votes this year, trailing only Golden State's Stephen Curry. / GETTY IMAGES

New York's game

NBA. The All-Star Game returns to the Big Apple, but will Carmelo Anthony see any playing time?

This season may be one of the bigger disappointments in the history of New York professional basketball, but for one shining weekend at least, the Big Apple will be the envy of every other NBA city, as Manhattan and Brooklyn will collaborate in hosting the league's All-Star Weekend festivities.

Lost in the abyss that's been Knicks and Nets basketball this season is the fact that for the first time since 1998, the Garden will host the All-Star Game. The last time the league's best played this particular exhibition in New York, it was Michael Jordan's final venture in the game as a Chicago Bull and Kobe Bryant's maiden appearance. Bryant, then a second-year player, was so popular that he started the game despite not even starting for his own team at the time.

That year featured a who's who of future basketball Hall of Famers — 13 in all. And while this year's collection comes close to matching up in star power — particularly in the Western Conference — it's different in that there are so many injury replacements, including Bryant, who is out for the season with an injured right shoulder. Bryant may be the biggest name on the infirmary list, but he's also joined by Dwyane Wade, Blake Griffin and Anthony Davis.

And that's not even including Carmelo Anthony, who is the lone New York representative. Anthony, who is trying his best to play Sunday, is reportedly waffling on whether to make the appearance.

He was voted as one of the three starting frontcourt players (alongside James and Pau Gasol). But Anthony, who raked in $124 million with last summer's deal, is also possibly thinking of his employers and the ramifications of playing on a bum knee.

But with the All-Star game being in his own backyard, being the lone New York rep and the fact that there's no telling when New York will be host again, Anthony doesn't sound like a guy who's open to reason.

"As of right now, I'll be there," said Anthony, following Wednesday night's loss in Orlando. "I'll be at the game. I'll probably participate in the game, unless something happens in the course of me rehabbing the next couple of days."

Anthony, who will also coach in the All-Star Celebrity Game with Spike Lee on Friday, sat out the loss to the Magic to rest his sore left knee. An ESPN report Thursday said that Anthony will "shut it down" after the All-Star game regardless of whether he plays or not Sunday.

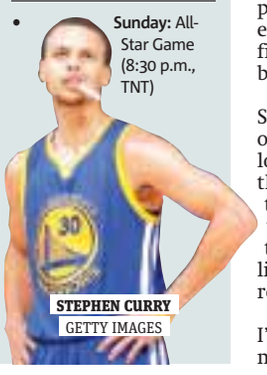
But if he's too injured to help his own team — the team that's paying him $22.875 million this year — then one would inquire about the sanity of playing even one minute on Sunday.

TONY WILLIAMS
@TBone8
sports@metro.us

The slate

All-Star schedule:

- **Friday:** Celebrity Game (7 p.m., ESPN), Rising Stars Challenge (9 p.m., TNT)
- **Saturday:** Shooting Stars event, Skills Challenge, 3-point Contest, Slam Dunk contest (8:30 p.m., TNT)
- **Sunday:** All-Star Game (8:30 p.m., TNT)



STEPHEN CURRY
GETTY IMAGES

3 SPORTS

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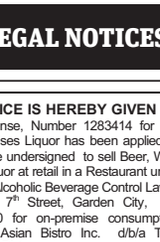

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REG. & ORIG. PRICES ARE OFFERING PRICES AND SAVINGS MAY NOT BE BASED ON ACTUAL SALES. SOME ORIG. PRICES NOT IN EFFECT DURING THE PAST 90 DAYS. PRESIDENTS' DAY SALE PRICES IN EFFECT NOW-2/16/2015. *Intermediate price reductions may have been taken. ‡All carat weights (ct. t.w.) are approximate; variance may be .05 carat. Jewelry photos may be enlarged or enhanced to show detail. Fine jewelry at select stores; log on to macys.com for locations. Almost all gemstones have been treated to enhance their beauty & require special care, log on to macys.com/gemstones or ask your sales professional. Extra savings taken off of already-reduced prices; "special" prices reflect extra savings. Specials are available while supplies last. Advertised merchandise may not be carried at your local Macy's & selection may vary by store. Prices & merchandise may differ at macys.com. N5010039.

OPEN A MACY'S ACCOUNT FOR EXTRA 20% SAVINGS THE FIRST 2 DAYS, UP TO $100, WITH MORE REWARDS TO COME. Macy's credit card is available subject to credit approval; new account savings valid the day your account is opened and the next day; excludes services, selected licensed departments, gift cards, restaurants, gourmet food & wine. The new account savings are limited to a total of $100; application must qualify for immediate approval to receive extra savings; employees not eligible.